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ABSTRACT

To examine how the school districts profiled in "Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts That Value Arts Education" are responding to the demands of how to provide high quality public education to all students throughout the country and whether their communities continue to support arts education, the Arts Education Partnership invited the profiled districts to Washington, DC on October 13, 2000. Thirty-two district representative teams (including board members, superintendents, principals, supervisors, teachers, and community leaders) and representatives from the Federal government were in attendance. "Crossfire" host Bill Press moderated a panel and audience dialogue with the local board presidents and superintendents. Notes were taken at all sessions to capture the key points. The report is divided into the following sections: "Introduction"; "Sustaining Success" (How Districts Are Sustaining Success; How Districts Are Sustaining Budgets); "Meeting Challenges" (Contending with Population Change; Responding to New Accountability Systems; Finding and Retaining Competent Teachers; Maintaining Continuity in Leadership and Direction); "Summing Up"; "The Impact of Research"; "Acknowledgments"; and "Participating Districts." (BT)

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Gaining the Arts Advantage: More Lessons from School Districts that Value Arts Education.

Arts Education Partnership Forum (Washington, DC, October 13, 2000)

— Laura Longley

President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, Washington, DC.
Arts Education Partnership, Washington, DC.
White House Millennium Council, Washington, DC.
Department of Education, Washington, DC.
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GAINING THE ARTS ADVANTAGE

More Lessons From School Districts That Value Arts Education

A FOLLOW-UP TO:
GAINING THE ARTS ADVANTAGE:
Lessons From School Districts That Value Arts Education

Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee for the Arts and the Humanities

Funded by the GE Fund, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Binney & Smith.
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GAINING THE ARTS ADVANTAGE

More Lessons From School Districts That Value Arts Education

FROM THE ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP FORUM
OCTOBER 13, 2000

Gaining The Arts Advantage: Lessons From School Districts That Value Arts Education was released by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in March, 1999. Based on two years of research directed by the Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the report profiled 91 school districts in 42 states recognized nationally for the quality of their arts education programs.

The purpose of the study was to determine the factors that enable school districts to make arts education part of the core curriculum for all students, countering the tendency in many districts to provide only modest time and resources for learning in the arts.

Thirteen "critical success factors" were identified by the researchers. The factors are listed on pages 4-5 and are discussed in detail in the original *Gaining* report, as well as in the companion brochure, *Why Your Child Needs the Arts Advantage.* Both are available from the Arts Education Partnership.

The report has been widely circulated, the focus of conferences and workshops and of articles in journals such as *Educational Leadership,* published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; *Principal,* published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals; *American School Board Journal,* published by the National School Boards Association, and on the Public Broadcasting Service's "Teacher Source" website.

The national debate about how to provide high quality public education to all students rages throughout the country. New systems of accountability are being adopted at state and local levels. Pressure on schools to improve their performance is intense.

How are the districts profiled in the *Gaining* report responding to these demands? Do their communities continue to support arts education? Are budgets stable? What specific challenges and opportunities do they face? How are they responding? Have they developed new insights, strategies, practices that could benefit other districts?

To explore these questions, the Arts Education Partnership invited the profiled districts to convene in Washington, DC, on October 13, 2000, at the National Education Association headquarters. Thirty-two districts sent teams of representatives, including board members, superintendents, principals, supervisors, teachers, and community leaders.

Senior representatives from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, national associations of educators, arts educators, arts organizations, and private and corporate foundations engaged the district representatives in intensive small-group discussions. CNN's *Crossfire* host Bill Press moderated a panel and audience dialogue with local board presidents and superintendents. Notes were taken at all sessions to capture the key points. *More Lessons From School Districts That Value Arts Education* is the result.

Richard J. Deasy
Director, Arts Education Partnership

LESSONS LEARNED

The audience was completely engrossed in what the district representatives were saying. We were getting into the concrete work, dealing with important questions, asking smart people, "How did you do it?" It was uplifting. I learned a lot.

JUDITH RENYI
Executive Director
National Education Association's Foundation for the Improvement of Education

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ACHIEVING DISTRICT-WIDE ARTS EDUCATION

FACTOR: THE COMMUNITY

In districts with strong arts education, the community—parents and families, artists, arts organizations, businesses, local civic and cultural leaders and institutions—is actively engaged in the arts policies and instructional programs of the district.

FACTOR: THE SCHOOL BOARD

School districts with strong arts education programs generally have boards of education that provide a supportive policy framework and environment for the arts.

FACTOR: THE SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendents who regularly articulate a vision for arts education are critically important to its successful implementation and stability.

FACTOR: CONTINUITY IN LEADERSHIP

There is enough continuity in the school and community leadership to implement comprehensive arts education.

FACTOR: DISTRICT ARTS COORDINATOR(S)

District arts coordinators facilitate program implementation throughout a school system and maintain an environment of support for arts education.

FACTOR: A CADRE OF PRINCIPALS

School principals who collectively support the policy of arts education for all students often are instrumental in the policy's successful district-wide implementation.

"Success breeds success" was a phrase used by several school districts to sum up their continued progress in strengthening their arts education programs. From Atlanta, GA, to Peoria, AZ, districts reported on programs expanded, teachers and artists added, budgets increased. Even districts that faced especially steep uphill climbs experienced gains in arts education. Cleveland's director of arts education, John Eby, explained that after the mayor took over the school system, increased the central budget from $98,000 to $3.2 million in one year, and brought in a new CEO who has been "hugely helpful" to the arts, the district is seeing the arts become an integral part of every school. "We have been able to start systematizing our programs without losing integrity and creativity, and we've started a committee to work on standards and courses of study," he said.

The districts have high expectations for themselves. As Dorinda Dee, Lawndale, CA, assistant superintendent, said, "Sustaining is not our goal. We've actually increased and moved ahead of where we were." She added, "Since the state of California has not yet seen the light, we still have to do it ourselves." That translates into "community support."

Without exception, school districts with strong arts education credit supportive parents as the rock on which their community base is built

In Illinois's Township High School District 113, where parent support has grown tremendously in the last few years, a key player is the Fine Arts Board ("FAB"). Made up mostly of parents, the board meets regularly with the district leaders and arts faculty on programs and issues related to the music, theater, visual arts, and dance programs. The group has been effective: the district recently passed a $70 million referendum to add an auditorium at

Deerfield High School and improve the one at Highland Park. The parents even brought in acoustical specialists.

Students themselves are helping build strong arts education, the districts report. "Kids vote with their feet," said a representative of the Williamsport, PA, district. "They vote for us when they choose electives. In our high school, half of the 2,000 students take arts every day. Those numbers are amazing for a comprehensive high school with high academic standards. As a result, our arts staff has grown." Similarly, in Park Ridge, IL, the Maine Township District 207, a grade 9-12 district where the arts are elective, some 1,600 of the 2,200 students participate and arts education staff has been increased to keep pace.

HOW DISTRICTS ARE SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Districts attending the "More Lessons" forum attributed their success in sustaining and enhancing their programs to community support nurtured by a variety of actions that are, as Atlanta's representative pointed out, "purposeful, intentional, and planned."

- A central, pervasive, comprehensive strategy for the districts is to develop *effective, long-term and multiple collaborations and partnerships* with a wide range of community leaders, organizations, and institutions.
- The strategy *encompasses internal as well as external personnel* and progressively builds a set of values, attitudes, practices, and infrastructures—a culture and continuity of support for the arts.
- Districts are *developing increasingly sophisticated information and*

FACTOR: TEACHERS WHO PRACTICE THEIR ART

Effective teachers of the arts are allowed to—indeed are encouraged to—continue to learn and grow in mastery of their art form as well as in their teaching competence.

FACTOR: PARENT/PUBLIC RELATIONS

School leaders in districts with strong, system-wide arts education seize opportunities to make their programs known throughout the community in order to secure support and funding for them.

FACTOR: AN ELEMENTARY FOUNDATION

Strong arts programs in the elementary school years are the foundation for strong system-wide programs.

FACTOR: OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGHER LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT

School leaders in these districts provide specialized arts programs as part of their broad strategy for securing and sustaining community support for the district's overall educational goals.

FACTOR: NATIONAL, STATE, AND OTHER OUTSIDE FORCES

Many districts in this study employ state or national policies and programs to advance arts education.

FACTOR: PLANNING

School leaders in this study advise the adoption of a comprehensive vision and plan for arts education but recommend its incremental implementation.

FACTOR: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

School districts that succeed in advancing arts education promote reflective practices at all levels of the schools to improve quality.

For a full discussion of the findings in the *Gaining* study, visit *www.aep-arts.org* or *www.pcah.gov*.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Phone calls from teachers saying, "I want to come work in your district" are measures of success for us.

MICHELLE FRATTI
Community Superintendent
CSD#25, Queens, NY

documenting their successes in order to strengthen their case for arts education.

- Districts develop *an array of events and activities* in which students and teachers share arts experiences with parents; community and political leaders; and arts, cultural, and community organizations. The activities are part of the district's *communication strategy for demonstrating the excellence of school programs and the central role of the arts in achieving that excellence.*
- Districts are giving increased time and attention to *collaborative planning* among school principals, faculty, artists and arts administrators. There is a clear understanding that quality programs require an overarching plan and a set of activities over time.

The districts offered practical guidance and examples of the actions they have taken to...

... develop effective, long-term and multiple collaborations and partnerships with a wide range of community leaders, organizations, and institutions.

- **Recognize mutually beneficial self-interests and work with community partners to achieve them.** In Vancouver, WA, for example, the quality of education is important to the quality of life in the community and, therefore, to attracting people to the area's major employer, Hewlett-Packard. In Greenville, SC, says Roy Fluhrer, "quality of life is something our community sells. We don't have to do a sell job because the Chamber of Commerce is doing it for us. When executives visit the area, the Chamber brings them to see our arts-focused Stone Academy."
- **Weave a network of community support among businesses and organizations at both the state and local level.** Maine School Administrative District 40, in Waldoboro, works closely with the state arts council, Maine Credit Card Corporation, museums, and other organizations, all of which have supported increased staff and more classroom spaces. In the small community of Lima, OH, the ongoing support of the local arts council has deepened into an investment in the mission of arts education. In turn, the work of the arts council, which now counts two educators on its board, has encouraged the school system's investment in the mission as well.

  Las Cruces, NM, seconded the importance of the local arts council: "Our partnership with the arts council is the main source of information and collaboration." Arlington County, VA, has become so proficient at partnership development and management that district schools are encouraged to pursue their own partnerships directly with the Washington area's arts organizations, including its 60 professional theaters.
- **Channel supporters' interests,** thereby ensuring a sense of appreciation and value on their part and real, measurable gains on the district's part. In Park Ridge, IL, Maine Township Fine Arts Chair Mike Pressler explains that "new people coming in bring new and different interests, and they will have a desire to make a difference or add their voice. Booster groups help channel those interests." Much like athletics booster clubs, the arts booster groups create a mechanism for involvement and achievement.
- **"Start the conversation with business,"** advises Doug Sessions, of Hewlett-Packard in Vancouver, WA. "Business needs innovation and people who can problem solve, so they look for schools that foster that."
- **Explore and develop collaborations with institutions of higher education.** The Urbana, IL, school district of nine schools and 5,000 students—a "do-able" district—counts itself fortunate that the University of Illinois "works hard to come to us." Representatives cite the benefits of the Krannert Center's Artist/Youth series

that "pushes into the schools." Superintendent Gene Amberg adds, "The art museum provides professional teaching strategies for our teachers. Everything provided is top quality." Like Urbana, the Williamsport, PA, district counts on local institutions of higher education to share visiting artists. "This is one way that local school leaders leverage $1 from outside sources for every $2 the district spends," a representative said. Also like Urbana, East Stroudsburg, PA, among many forum attendees, noted the district's reliance on its partnership with East Stroudsburg University for the professional development of teachers.

...to progressively build a set of values, attitudes, practices, and infrastructures—a culture and continuity of support for the arts—among internal as well as external personnel...

- **Make sure community arts organizations know a school district's context before coming into it.** "Community organizations need to find a common, overlapping focus," said Rockcastle County, KY, Basic Arts Coordinator Allen Pensol. "You don't want to have ten different groups competing for projects, leadership, or agendas."
- **Get the right superintendent for your district.** "People hire in their own image," observes Kettle Moraine, WI, district superintendent Sarah Jerome, "so be sure to get the right superintendent. If you do, the rest follows because support for arts education is built into the hiring process for other personnel. If you have a superintendent who inquires about a job candidate's interest in the arts, the district will have people in the general classroom who are familiar with arts work."
- **Teach your "internal audience."** Atlanta's visual arts coordinator, Gus Peterson, said, "We teach the board and principals about what arts education is and how it is done."
- **Provide your teachers with professional development to enhance their "outreach" and "linking" skills.** Teachers who learn how to work with community organizations and to collaborate with other educators and administrators will become better cultivators of community support, better nurturers of external and internal partnerships, and better "connectors" for arts education.

...to develop information and document successes...

- **Track your graduates.** Some districts, such as Independence, MO, and Highland Park, IL, are tracking their graduates. In Peoria, AZ, Director of Arts Education Andre Licardi "pulls high school transcripts for arts students and compares them with the top ten percent of the students." He's found that at least 85 percent of the top students study the arts. What's more, all of the top ten students study the arts. "We also align our arts curriculum and compare it to national and state standards, then match results with other subjects," he added. Peoria has even tracked parent attendance at arts events and compared it favorably to football attendance.
- **Survey the community.** San Jose, CA, has strengthened its arts case by surveying the community and learning that the number one thing they want in education is the arts. "That support," says External Programs Director William Erlendson, "has made the arts a budget priority."
- **Keep a list of accomplishments,** advised Fulton County, GA, Music Education Coordinator Jay Wucher. "Think like a school board member, not like a teacher. You have to be able to translate for lawyers. We keep an annual list of accomplishments, and we use the Music Educators' (MENC) *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards* as a benchmark."

GAINING GROUND

District representatives attending the "More Lessons" forum reported that their presence in the *Gaining the Arts Advantage* study and report contributed to their ongoing success. Some districts have leveraged their inclusion to increase their number of arts teachers, better their public relations efforts, pass bond issues, initiate capital improvements, and, overall, continue their improvement in arts education. Most of all, the report appears to have given districts a psychological boost, a chance for reaffirmation of good work. As one educator said, "You need to believe you've got a good arts program in order to have a good arts program."

MORE RESEARCH

"We need more research that shows the impact of the arts, on how the arts help teachers change their practice," said an East Stroudsburg, PA, participant, speaking for many districts present at the forum.

...to develop an array of events and activities... that are part of the district's communications strategy for demonstrating the excellence of school programs and the central role of the arts in achieving that excellence...

- **Start every school board meeting with an arts presentation.** The representatives of Henrico, VA, spoke for many districts when they said this was a regular practice in the district. The Henrico district also invites senior citizens to student performances.
- **Teach while you show-and-tell.** When Olathe, KS, mounts an art exhibit, the student artwork is always displayed with written "learning statements" or explanations from the students to show what they have learned. This helps the board know what students are getting from their art classes. Advocacy statements are included in concert programs and other written materials that go to parents and other community members so they understand what students are learning in school and what's happening in the classrooms.
- **Present test results in context.** Gene Amberg, superintendent of Urbana, IL, School District 116, supports assessments but tries to help parents see them as "one picture in a photo album." He notes, "Try to get the school board and parents to see that they are only one measure. Other findings are as important."

...to give more time and attention to collaborative planning among school principals, faculty, artists and arts administrators...

- **"Rely on your teachers to start programs and develop strategies.** This may be a Pollyanna approach, but if you can get the teachers' support, everything else will fall into place," said a Jefferson County, KY, participant.
- **Consult colleagues in other school districts who can help you plan.** Case in point: When Charlottesville City School District, VA, decided to start a dance program, they turned first to *Gaining the Arts Advantage* for examples. "We found one in Port Washington, NY, and we started a program using their model." (Port Washington schools have a ten-year track record of success. Their dance program started with pre-kindergarten and high school, and over time, said David Meoli, Director of Creative Arts, "We've fostered every partnership we could, with American Ballet Theatre and former Martha Graham Company dancers. Now we're working toward middle school with the support of parents and teachers who meet regularly.")

When the representatives talked about their continuing use of the 13 factors cited in *Gaining the Arts Advantage*, generally it was about how the factors have helped them become more strategic and plan better. They say the factors serve as benchmarks for what they're doing well and what they should be doing next. For example, representatives from Elmira City Schools, NY, reported progress by success factor (all maintained or improved). The district has made a major effort to increase time for staff development and for planning by elementary arts teachers.

HOW DISTRICTS ARE SUSTAINING BUDGETS

A key question from national leaders attending the "More Lessons" forum was whether budget support for arts education in the districts was growing or declining. Virtually all of the districts reported that they were sustaining budget support, and most indicated that they had some kind of line item. Of those districts that had seen their budgets increase, most attributed the new funds to ongoing advocacy on the part of enlightened school boards, superintendents, teachers, students, parents, arts partners, and other community members who value the arts in education.

"Advocacy is part of the job" was the point of view of many forum participants. And what most have come to realize is that the best advocacy is less PR and more education. Therefore, districts put increasing time and effort into the development of facts and figures that give ballast to their case for arts education. A number of representatives acknowledged that the process of participating in the original *Gaining* study had helped them learn to focus and develop information. They had had to find out about themselves, delving into their district financials to pull out their budget information. That work revealed evidence of their strength. They came to understand that their goal was not to exert influence for its own sake but to exert it strategically.

Fairfax County's FACE (Fairfax Arts Coalition for Education of community members and teachers) keeps advocacy information regularly in front of the public. Fine Arts Coordinator Roger Tomhave says, "FACE engages student performing groups and presents research on the benefits of an arts education to stay in the 'face' of county supervisors, who control the county funds."

Or, as Carrie Nordlund, art department chair from Independence, MO, said, "You have to toot your horn a lot."

True enough, the districts agreed. But they also noted that the piece you play must be compelling enough to build your audience. Furthermore, you must play it with skill, timing, and frequency. "The issues will keep coming back, and the detractors will be there," said Robert Hernz, school board president in Robbinsdale, MN. "Some people will see the arts as a 'frill,' a sentiment that is now coming through technology's role or teacher certification. In addition, there will be those who object to the arts for religious or other reasons, and there will be the 'no tax' people who object to the education budget." He added, "There will always be a need for advocates to sustain arts education"

THE GPA

The arts should count in the grade point average, several districts' representatives said emphatically. The common practice in admission to higher education of dropping arts classes from the GPA must be stopped, they said. It makes a profound statement that an education in the arts is not valued.

MEETING CHALLENGES

In varying degrees, the 32 school districts attending the "More Lessons" meeting reported grappling with four primary challenges facing educators across the country.

(1) Contending with the multiple effects of growing or declining populations and linguistically and culturally *diverse student populations;*

(2) Responding to new state or local *accountability systems*, some involving high-stakes testing, that require adjustments in curriculum and instruction;

(3) Finding and retaining *competent teachers* and, increasingly, principals;

(4) Maintaining *continuity in leadership and direction* as boards and superintendents change.

Impressively, all of the districts reported success in sustaining and even expanding arts education, often capitalizing on these very challenges to garner support and resources.

Challenge: Contending With Population Change

Representatives of Port Washington, NY, and Glen Ridge, NJ, talked about the pressures of population growth on arts education. Judith Conk, superintendent of Glen Ridge, acknowledged that "this issue of a tax base and its influence on the budget is the biggest issue for us. We are a bedroom community without any significant industrial or commercial base, which restricts resources. Our student population grew from 1,300 to 1,680 students without any additional space or new money. We have survived the budget cutting and instructions to eliminate all 'nonmandated' items by stretching the 'rubberband' of support for the arts as far as possible." In Port Washington, David Meoli noted that the district is growing at such a pace that the administration is adding portable classrooms at many schools. "Sustaining political support for education is a challenge here," he added. "A district bond issue went down recently, but the arts have not been touched by budget problems because the programs are so well established."

In Robbinsdale, MN, Dennis Jewett, Artistic Director (principal) of the FAIR School and his colleagues are coping with the opposite problem: shrinking enrollments. "The school district is experiencing a drop in enrollment, which has become serious enough that the majority of community attention has focused on the need to close schools." Community support for the arts program has remained strong, however. In fact, the district has been able to add teaching positions in the arts and now has more students taking arts electives in high school.

In San Jose, CA, the school district must meet the continual and considerable challenges of a racially, culturally, and economically diverse student population. External Programs Director William Erlendson has found "Community Conversations" to be an invaluable tool for engaging students' parents in the process of shaping their children's education. "Last year," he said, "we held six Community Conversations, with 120 participants in each discussing what they wanted their children to have learned when they graduate from high school? And we asked them to think about how the students would get to those learnings. These conversations were then translated into a "School Accountability Report Card" for parents. Because it's an external document, it helps to move the school district forward. We also find that an online "Climate Survey," helps engage all parents and teachers and set up a baseline for collegiality, safety, curriculum, and the

school performance report." The survey showed overwhelming support for the district's art programs, which are now a district budget priority.

Challenge: Responding to New Accountability Systems

In response to new accountability and assessment systems, the general strategy among the school districts is to respond well to standards, reviewing district curriculum in light of them, but to be very cautious about assessments. Many districts share the view that assessments tend to be narrow in focus and method and therefore not helpful to the arts education cause. On the other hand, districts such as Independence, MO, and Urbana, IL, seem to feel that assessments have helped drive their arts agendas forward.

"The state assessment is tied to standards. It's been a factor in sustaining our success," said Independence's Carrie Nordlund. There the arts education program has expanded to include kindergarten, and staff has been added.

"Our budget has increased; we got a higher allotment per student at the elementary school level," she said. "Assessment pressure helps. We do a lot of measuring, and the state rates districts and publishes scores in the newspapers. Constant improvement is required, and competencies are tracked. Each teacher must maintain documentation through all levels, and we have a reflection process for students, teachers, and administrators."

"We have no choice," commented Allen Pensol of Rockcastle, KY. "There have been ten years of assessments. Before that the focus was on teachers, so when the state testing requirement came in, we were ahead of the game."

Jefferson County, KY, representatives added, "The statewide assessment in the arts is a written exam, not a performance assessment. The information or evidence is there, however, showing student achievement in the arts. High-stakes testing in our state includes the arts, so it helps. You should lobby states to do the same. Ours may not be the best assessment, but it's a start. We show that we're doing something. But we know our job is to deliver more than just higher scores."

In Peoria, AZ, said Andre Licardi, "Our jobs are on the line. Accountability is a big issue here. Test scores are publicized in the newspaper and on the web."

In San Jose, CA, the school district has begun to use the Academic Performance Indicator (API), which is a standardized test. The content of the test has not been aligned with the state standards for student learning, however. To improve schools on the API, schools are adding math and science courses, a practice that is hurting arts electives.

Atlanta, GA, reports competition from reading and math testing. For districts in states such as South Carolina and Virginia where high-stakes testing has taken hold, assessments mean that "all big new funding goes to the high-stakes areas."

"We don't do a lot with numbers and statistics because they don't reflect the arts very well," said Maine Township's (IL) Mike Pressler. "But we're developing a better rubric that is standards-based. It's hard, but we already have good seven-year longitudinal data in our speech and communications program."

Challenge: Finding and Retaining Competent Teachers

The most daunting challenge facing all of the school districts is the recruitment, retention, and continuing professional development of teachers. Many different approaches to the problem were shared at the forum, from the creation of "teacher formation centers" for renewing teachers from within to the promise of professional development as incentive. Atlanta continues to offer free piano lessons for teachers and staff, many of whom are parents of district students. Greenville's Peace Center for the Performing Arts (SC) offers a two-week summer institute each year for 40 district teachers.

THINK ABOUT IT

Think like a school board member, not like a teacher. You have to be able to translate for lawyers.

JAY WUCHER
Music Education Coordinator
Fulton County, GA

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For a list of state-by-state arts education policies, see the Arts Education Partnership web site at http://aep-arts.org

LISTEN, LEARN, UNDERSTAND

For artists and other community members working in the schools, Judith Conk, Glen Ridge, NJ, superintendent, had these three words of advice:

- **Listen to people in the school district when they're working;**
- **Learn the context, e.g. the various pressures in the schools;**
- **Understand that change is a process, not an event, and that it's important to leave something behind. For an artist, what he or she does is important, but so is what they leave behind in the heart of the teacher.**

ARTS INTEGRATION

Districts note a need to document and define success in arts integration. Arts integration is something that means something different in schools and communities than it does in "policy wonk" arenas, they said.

The fundamental problem is a nationwide shortage of teachers, particularly certified teachers. Cost of living is a further complicating factor in some areas, such as Fairfax County, VA, and San Jose, CA, the capital of Silicon Valley, where new teachers especially find it difficult to get along on their relatively low salaries.

In Greenville, Roy Fluhrer reported, the school district administration is having a hard time recruiting enough teachers to provide the arts in all elementary schools and arts magnet schools. To address this, they adopted an alternative for licensing artist teachers. Quality is to be insured through the state arts council and the Arts in the Basic Curriculum project. Despite such measures, Fluhrer continues to wonder where the qualified arts teachers will come from.

The districts had no magic solutions for addressing the shortage of certified arts teachers. Fremont, WY, a district that is 97 percent Native American, favors a "grow your own" strategy. The district collaborates with the local college and community college to encourage entering students to consider a career in teaching. Las Cruces, NM, looks to the other end of the continuum and tries to recruit newly retired teachers.

An emerging strategy is to hire artists. "We had to hire artists—uncertified—as teachers for the first time," reported Independence, MO. However, this practice requires districts to take steps to address the artist's lack of pedagogical training. Michelle Fratti, superintendent of CSD #25 in Queens, NY, discussed the program her district has developed to enable the artists to meet state certification requirements over a period of time. "This is not atypical," said Fratti. "The teachers' union is powerful in New York City. It simply makes for a unique challenge to build support for the change."

Districts aware of the challenges of classroom management seek to hire artists who have worked as teaching artists in their schools.

While the forum participants' discussions of the professional development of teachers focused on improving instruction, they also talked about enhancing teachers' skills in working with community organizations and in getting community visibility for their programs. Such expertise is critical for the future progress of arts education in school districts, the participants agreed.

"We also advise training principals," said Dorita Gibson, a CSD #25 principal. Other district representatives concurred. "Carefully structured professional development for principals, along with teachers, helps them support the teachers," Lawndale's representative added, then urged, "Recognize the artistic talent and interests of principals as well as staff." CSD #25's participants concurred:

"The challenge for us is to not see the arts as something apart. So all of our staff developers—tech, arts, etc.—are all trained together."

The benefits of such a strategy are many. "It's contagious," noted an East Stroudsburg, PA, representative. "Programs often start with a teacher and a principal one year. Every year after it grows little by little, from one class to a whole grade, to multiple grades, to the whole school, to other schools—a gradual growing process from year to year."

Challenge: Maintaining Continuity in Leadership and Direction

To maintain continuity in leadership and direction, the *Gaining* study found, a school district needs a supportive community and school board, a superintendent publicly committed to the arts as an educational goal, and, in the best of all possible worlds, district arts coordinators to facilitate program implementation and stimulate a healthy environment for arts education.

Fremont County, WY, models continuity. In this Native American district, the school board and superintendent are enthusiastic arts supporters. "The arts are not categorized here; they are part of life," said Superintendent Lonn Hoffman. Eighty-five to 90 percent of the community turns out for the school's fine arts events.

For most of the other districts present at the forum, board and administrative turnover is an ongoing challenge. It makes what Greenville's Roy Fluhrer calls "the daily battle of saving the arts" all the more challenging. "As superintendents change, the arts have to re-present their case, which is very damaging to maintaining continuity in education programs and messages supportive of the arts."

As important as a superintendent is, Fluhrer continues to see the presence of district arts coordinators as "the most significant key to success—and the most important factor for success in any school district." But like so many other districts that lost their arts coordinators to budget cuts in the early 1990s, today Greenville manages without them but sees the effect of their absence. For example, the district has statewide standards for arts education and frameworks for them, but without the coordinators the district is lacking consistent development of curriculum.

Like Greenville, Robbinsdale, MN, also lost its coordinators to budget cuts and has not yet been able to replace them. To bridge this gap, district leadership has formed teams of arts teachers across schools guided by a lead teacher. They plan to use this mode of coordination until the coordinator positions are reinstated.

MAGNETS

As a way of providing a higher level of opportunity for arts-enthusiastic students, magnet schools continue to attract some districts (e.g. Las Cruces, NM, Vancouver, WA, Greenville, SC) but not others (e.g. Fairfax County, VA). In San Jose, CA, an assessment of students attending magnet schools showed that students are choosing the arts magnet over other magnet schools. In Fairfax County, magnets are viewed as a way for the district to "let itself off the hook" in providing strong arts education for every student. Fairfax County avoids "stand-alone magnets," because "this is expecting is way too little" for only one school to have an arts focus. Fairfax would prefer to be a "magnet county" in which all the schools have strong arts programs.

Summing up

Bill Press may have asked the most crucial question of the forum when he asked the panel of board presidents and superintendents: "Are you alone in this work or are there other school leaders across the country that care this much about the arts?" Their reply: They are not alone. But it is a matter of seeing every challenge as an opportunity. "You can show that the arts are part of the solution to virtually every school challenge," said Glen Ridge's superintendent, Judith Conk. "But you have to have the vision and persistence to make the case."

THE IMPACT OF *GAINING THE ARTS ADVANTAGE* RESEARCH AND OTHER NATIONAL STUDIES

Throughout the forum discussions, school and community leaders cited the growing body of arts education research as an important support for their work. They identified three key values in the *Gaining the Arts Advantage* report:

- the report gave visibility to their successes and strengthened the commitment of school and community leaders to sustaining and enhancing their programs;
- factors in the report created an analytical and planning tool to examine the current strength of arts education programs and to project needs;
- the report provided a format for discussion across school districts focused on areas of common interest and needs.

Since the release of *Gaining the Arts Advantage*, two additional reports also have provided research-based support for district-wide arts education.

Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning, made possible by the GE Fund and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, was released in October, 1999, by the Arts Education Partnership and President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. *Champions* provides important evidence of enhanced learning and achievement when the arts are an integral part of the educational experience, both in and out of America's K-12 schools. The report compiles the results of seven major research projects involving students, educators, artists, and others in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco/Bay Area. Among the findings:

- Students with high levels of arts participation outperform "arts-poor" students on virtually every measure.
- The arts have a measurable impact on students in "high-poverty" and urban settings.
- The arts in after-school programs guide disadvantaged youth toward positive behaviors and goals.
- Learning through the arts has significant effects on learning in other domains.
- Arts experiences enhance "critical thinking" abilities and outcomes.
- The arts enable educators to reach students in effective ways.

Taken together, *Champions of Change* and *Gaining the Arts Advantage* give arts education supporters both evidence of why the arts are critical to teaching and learning and how to build strong district-wide arts education.

To further assist community leaders from the arts, education, business, civic and government sectors who seek to combine their talents and resources in developing partnerships that build and support district-wide arts education, the Arts Education Partnership prepared *Learning Partnerships: Improving Learning in Schools with Arts Partners in the Community*. Commisssioned by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Arts.

These reports are available online at: *www.aep-arts.org* and can be downloaded in .pdf formats.

To order reprints, contact:

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ARTS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The Arts Education Partnership is a private, nonprofit coalition of more than 100 national education, arts, business, philanthropic, and government organizations that demonstrate and promote the essential role of arts education in enabling all students to succeed in school, life, and work. The Partnership was formed in 1995 through a cooperative agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), U.S. Department of Education, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

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Atlanta Public Schools (GA)
Charlottesville City Schools (VA)
Cleveland Municipal School District (OH)
Community School District #25 (Queens, NY)
East Stroudsburg Public Schools (PA)
Elmira City School District (NY)
Fairfax County Public Schools (VA)
Fremont County School District 14 (WY)
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